(e) At present, the consumer billing system of DESU is computerised and is working satisfactorily. DESU has installed computer terminals in its 23 District Offices out of 24 District Offices to facilitate transmission and retrieval of the data relating to the electricity bills to and from the main Computer Centre. This facilitates prompt attendance/redressal of the complaints regarding electricity bills. The present computerised billing system is functioning effectively. The position is reviewed from time to time by DESU in the light of the suggestions received from the consumers etc.

Clearance to Kayamkulam and Mangalore Power Projects

32. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the 'Financial Express' of the 15th August, 1991 regarding the status of clearance of two Southern thermal power plants at Kayamkulam and Mangalore;

(b) if so, what are the hurdles which are coming in this way of clearance of these power projects;

(c) whether clearance has not so far been received from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) by when the projects are likely to receive the final sanction from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs and what is the total expenditure already incurred on the preliminary work conducted at the site in Kerala; and

(e) whether it is a fact the Soviet Union had refused to prepare detailed project reports for these two projects, if so, the details thereof and also reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The proposals for setting up of 2x210 MW thermal power projects each at Kayamkulam (Kerala) and Mangalore (Karnataka) require clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests from environmental/forest angle with specific reference to major issues like Fly Ash Utilisation, R&R Plan and Ash Disposal Plan.

(d) The question of issue of final sanctions for these two projects arises only after environment/forest clearance and funding etc., are tied up. An expenditure of about Rs. 431 lakhs has been incurred upto July, 1991 in respect of Kayamkulam power project in connection with preliminary work at site.

(e) No, Sir.

Performance of SEBs

33 SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the alarming financial problems being faced by SEBs, the Planning Commission has urged State Governments to pay immediate attention to the tariff structure;

(b) whether it is a fact that many SEBs are overstaffed and overall efficiency and productivity has fallen; and

(c) if so, the details of the steps Government propose to take to improve the performance of SEBs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) The Planning Commission has not issued any specific instructions to the State Governments on the tariff structure of State Electricity Boards. However, the need to rationalise the tariff structure for improving the financial position of the SEBs has been emphasised to the State Governments from time to time.

(b) and (c) The level of man-power obtaining in a number of Boards ap-

pears to be in excess of the optimum level. The need for improvement of the performance of the State Electricity Boards has been stressed to the States, time and again, in various forums of discussions, suggesting steps like equity participation by the State Government, provision of specific grants to meet the losses for supply of power to the agricultural sector, periodical revision of tariff, improving the performance of generating stations, reducing Transmission and Distribution losses, so that they could at least earn the statutory minimum return of 3 per cent.

Withdrawal of Private Drilling Companies from ONGC Operations

34. DR. NARREDDY THULASI REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the private drilling companies on contract with ONGC are contemplating to withdraw from drilling operations;

(b) if so, what are the names of the companies which have withdrawn/propose to withdraw from the drilling operations;

(c) what are the reasons therefor;

(d) what is the estimated crude oil production likely to come down as a consequence thereof;

(e) the estimated quantity (with cost in foreign exchange) that would be required to import in order to meet the difference in production; and

(f) what steps have been taken by Government to resolve the impasse with the private drilling companies?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) to (c) No company on contract for drilling services has withdrawn nor has any intimation been received from them in this regard.

(d) to (f) Do not arise.

DESU Losing Crores Every Month

35. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government have been drawn to a news-item captioned "DESU losing crores every month" as reported in the 'Indian Express' of the 9th August, 1991;

(b) if so, whether the DESU has changed its billing system from bi-monthly to four monthly meter reading system;

(c) whether it is a fact that due to four monthly meter reading system, the consumption of energy is mostly misused by unscrupulous consumers; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to rectify the situations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Under the present system of DESU, bills to the domestic consumers are sent on bi-monthly basis and to the non-domestic/industrial consumers on monthly basis. A bill on actual meter reading basis is prepared every four months and a bill on provisional basis is sent in between for two months based on past consumption in the case of domestic consumers. The system of four monthly meter reading has been adopted by DESU due to the shortage of Meter Readers.

(c) According to DESU, the system of four monthly reading of meters in respect of domestic consumers does not specifically lead to misuse of energy as a Four-digit Meter can record